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# NOTES

## AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

The conference held in Chicago in January under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education gave a clear indication of the strength of the movement for industrial training. Presidents Eliot and Pritchett and other recognized leaders of educational thought expressed in strongest terms their belief in the necessity for educational development along industrial lines. The exhibits made by manual-training schools from different sections of the country show something of the progress already made in industrial training.

The Agricultural Guild of the The University of Chicago is attempting to do for agriculture what the trade and industrial schools are doing to train workers in other lines.

An informal apprenticeship system of training has given almost all the practical training for farm work that we have had in America. For a generation the agricultural colleges have been developing a system of scientific and theoretical agricultural education, but they are not organized in such a way as to enable them to give much practice in the art of agriculture. The informal apprenticeship system of the farm under which the father trains his sons has not given the best results because of the inefficiency of the trainers. The low status of the agricultural industry and the wrong ideals entertained are also accountable for the lack of results. Serious economic difficulties have beset the farmer who attempted to apply business methods in agriculture. These may be summarized under seven heads:

1. The agricultural industry which employed almost all the population a century ago and from which people have been constantly passing to other lines of employment must offer less remuneration than the new industries which are seeking men; otherwise, the movement could not take place. The natural inertia and immobility of labor and capital would prevent movement from an old industry to a new if the returns in the old industry were equal to those expected in the new industries, like manufacture, transportation, and commerce, which for a century have secured recruits at the expense of the agricultural population. As a general propo-

sition, it is safe to say that competition has been keener and financial returns lower in agriculture than in the newer industries.

2. The land policy adopted by the United States government has held out subsidies in the form of increasing land values which have made it possible to put agricultural products on the market below their cost of production.

3. The under-paid labor of women and children in agriculture has had a tendency to lower the price of agricultural products.

4. The general neglect of the fertility element in estimating the cost of production has made many farmers think they were getting good returns, when as a matter of fact they were selling their products below the cost of production.

5. The individualistic development of the farmer makes it difficult for him to work with others or to take orders. This characteristic makes it extremely hard to organize the agricultural industry on a business basis.

6. The extent of territory over which agricultural operations are conducted makes the supervision of agricultural labor on a considerable scale difficult.

7. Climatic control over the industry making it impossible to continue one line of work throughout the year prevents the specialization and division of labor which have so greatly increased the efficiency of labor in other lines of production.

All of these combine to give the individual farmer, who, with his family, is doing his own work, an advantage over the man who undertakes to carry on agriculture on a large scale or with hired labor. The small farmer, however, is not likely to be in touch with all of the improved methods or to be ready to adopt the suggestions of the scientific men who are working out new and better ways of doing things and very few farmers are in a position to take apprentices and give them a good practical training in the art of agriculture.

Now that the public domain is practically exhausted and the importance of maintaining soil fertility is generally recognized, two of the most serious economic difficulties in the way of business methods in agriculture are removed. It seems safe to assume that subsidized competition will not be so serious in the future. There is also a desire on the part of increasing numbers of city men to develop farmers and to maintain the natural resources of the country. The first requisite to success in applying business methods to

agriculture on a considerable scale is the existence of well-trained and efficient farm managers. An almost equally important condition is a supply of reliable and efficient laborers. It is, perhaps, not less important for the man who undertakes to carry on farming on a large scale, as he would enter a business enterprise, that he have expert advice as to the kind of farm work to be undertaken in any given locality.

To find practical, efficient, scientific training, and teaching ability in one man is very difficult, but these characteristics are absolutely necessary if the apprenticeship system of training expert farmers and farm managers which the Agricultural Guild of The University of Chicago has undertaken is to be successful. Abundance of land and capital are available. The amount now controlled is over 5,000 acres within 30 miles of Chicago. The members of the Guild are ready to furnish any amount of capital and land that can be intelligently used. Applications for positions as apprentices and students are very numerous from all sections of the country. True, many of these applicants do not realize that the training course means hard work under ordinary farm conditions, with only the amount of reading, study, and lecture work that is required to make the work more efficient; but when that has been explained to them there are still sufficient numbers willing to do any reasonable amount of work if the conditions under which they are doing it can be made educationally advantageous.

The practical difficulties in organizing the work are very serious and call for the best efforts and energies of all who believe in this kind of education. The approval of the general plan of the work has been almost universal from the agricultural colleges all over the country; from them and from the Department of Agriculture have come statements that this practical education is what is most needed to supplement the work already being done to advance agricultural development. All of them feel that men who have secured this training will readily command the most desirable positions both in the practical and educational field. Hearty co-operation has been promised on all sides. We have been asked to extend the work into different sections of the country. The first necessity, however, is to overcome the difficulties inherent in organizing any new plan and make it successful at one place. If this can be done there is no doubt that the plan will be readily adopted elsewhere.

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